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**Letter dated 6 July 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

I have the honour to draw your attention to the statement on the Middle East, issued on 3 July 2006 by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Kirsti **Lintonen**
Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations

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## Annex to the letter dated 6 July 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English, French and Spanish]

## Statement on the Middle East by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union

The European Union is extremely concerned about the situation that has evolved over recent days between Israel and the Palestinians and calls on all parties to abstain from any actions that are in violation of international law. It calls for the immediate and unconditional release of the kidnapped Israeli soldier. The European Union strongly condemns the murder of the Israeli victim of a kidnapping in the West Bank. It calls on the Palestinian leadership to bring an end to violence and terrorist activities, including the firing of rockets on Israeli territory.

The European Union expresses its particular concern about the detention of elected members of the Palestinian Government and legislature. Those detained should be accorded their full legal rights.

The European Union reminds all parties of their responsibility to protect civilian lives. Notwithstanding the legitimate right of self-defence of Israel, ongoing military operations should be in accordance with international law. It calls on Israel to exercise the utmost restraint and to avoid disproportionate action. It regrets the destruction of essential infrastructure, which contributes to the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Gaza. Restoring electricity and water supplies and access for humanitarian organizations must be a priority now so that a humanitarian crisis can be prevented.

The European Union emphasizes the primacy of diplomatic means and calls upon all parties in the region to make every effort possible to resolve the current situation by peaceful means.

The European Union reaffirms its conviction that only a negotiated two-State solution can bring peace and security to the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples. A return to the peace process and to the implementation of the road map is therefore imperative. The European Union asks that both parties meet their responsibilities and demonstrate urgently an active commitment to the search for a negotiated solution.

The acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania, the candidate countries Croatia,* the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* and Turkey, the countries of the stabilization and association process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine align themselves with the present statement.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the stabilization and association process.